TL 4395

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
AMNISTÍA INTERNACIONAL
AMNISTIE INTERNATIONALE
МЕЖДУНАРОДНАЯ АМНИСТИЯ
منظمة العفو الدولية
國際特赦組織

News Service 113/98

AI INDEX: ASA 21/64/98
12 JUNE 1998

Indonesia: East Timorese protest violently broken up -- how committed is the Habibie Government to human rights?

Amnesty International was appalled today to learn that a peaceful demonstration of hundreds of East Timorese students in Jakarta was violently broken up and its participants arrested, just weeks after the new leadership in Indonesia promised greater respect for human rights.

"Such peaceful protests are a test for the Habibie Government's commitment to human rights," Amnesty International said today.

"Just yesterday, President Habibie called on the Indonesian Armed Forces to demonstrate their professionalism through respect for human rights in dealing with riots and disturbances. Today, the same forces have forcibly broken up a peaceful political demonstration and detained the participants which is worryingly reminiscent of practices under the Suharto presidency."

This morning around a thousand East Timorese students held a peaceful demonstration in the grounds of the Indonesian Foreign Affairs Ministry in Jakarta. The students were demanding a referendum for East Timor, the release of East Timorese political prisoners and implementation of United Nations recommendations on human rights in East Timor.

The students were allowed to occupy the area for several hours but were then forcibly evicted by hundreds of security forces, from different units. Around 15 military buses were used to take the students away from the Ministry compound.

It is not clear where the East Timorese were taken or are now being held. Human rights lawyers are currently attempting to clarify their whereabouts and status. Jakarta military officials have already confirmed that many are being detained for questioning at a military camp in Cibubur outside of Jakarta. Two Indonesian former prisoners of conscience, Bonar Tigor Naipospos and Tri Agus Susanto, and an East Timorese student, Benevides Correia Barros, who were taken into custody at the Miliary Police Headquarters have now been released.

Several individuals are known to have been wounded during the break-up of the demonstration. One youth is reported by human rights lawyers to have suffered a bayonet wound, while two others are believed to have broken legs. Three female students are currently seeking medical treatment at a Jakarta hospital.

The treatment of the East Timorese protestors is in contrast to the treatment of Indonesian students who occupied the national parliament in the days leading up to former President Suharto's resignation.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT
1 Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ, United Kingdom
Tel: Int. Code: (44) (171) 413 5500. UK Code: (0171) 413 5500. Fax: Int. Code: (44) (171) 956 1157. UK Code: (0171) 956 1157.
E-Mail: amnestyis@amnesty.org Web: http://www.amnesty.org
Telegrams: Amnesty London WC1 Telex: 28502 AMNSTY G

"Because the students were allowed to demonstrate, wide scale bloodshed and violence was avoided during the stepping down of former President Suharto," Amnesty International said. "The same restraint and tolerance of peaceful dissent must also be shown towards East Timorese who should be allowed to peacefully voice their demands without fear of arrest or violence."
ENDS.../